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THE PROPHECY THAT GUIDES FERDINAND OF BULGARIA

St. Sophia Will Be Christian,
Says Tradition, When Four
Kings Celebrate Victory
Under Its Dome

IN Sofia, the capital city of Bulgaria, a woman loves, doubts and is torn by alternate hope and anguish. She is Queen Eleonora, the second and German wife of the Czar Ferdinand. She tells herself, "He dreams again," and asks, "Is it I or the blond ghost of his French princess that, in his dream, sits upon the throne of Theodora?"

The story is told in Europe, and as a story it is given here. It is commonplace to say that this or that love holds the secret of the great war. But who can know the heart of a King, and especially if he be Ferdinand, the inexplicable figure in the family of Kings? As Czar of Bulgaria he acts and motives have been so mysterious that he is still called the enigma of Europe.

Ferdinand amounted to nothing much until he met his French Princess. He was a gilded youth of Paris and Vienna. He was grandson of the last King of the French, his mother being the celebrated Clementine, daughter of Louis Philippe. She had married Prince August of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha while her father still reigned over France. Ferdinand grew up half French, half German, but preferring Paris as a boulevardier and man of the world.

His mother got him nominated Reigning Prince of Bulgaria, but he was loath to risk the agreeable life of sparkling capitals to mix in the riots of a half Turkish and poverty-stricken principality. The Powers did not recognize him. When bored he ran back to Paris.

Then all changed in a day. He met the beautiful, ami-



The Czarina Eleonora, the German wife of Ferdinand.

able and poetic Princess Marie Louise of Bourbon-Parma of the legitimate line of French Kings, daughter of Duke Robert, owner of lordly Chambord. This grandest of historic French chateaux came to the Bourbon-Parmas through their childless uncle, the Comte de Chambord, along with fifty millions of the most romantic money in the world—the accumulated private estates of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

She was the bride chosen for Ferdinand by his wise old mother. Ferdinand loved her at first sight—and he was transfixed.

The young couple dreamed a dream upon their gold at Chambord. It was no sordid dream, but noble beyond imaginations of modern times. It was her dream. He absorbed it and with her aid and inspiration their dream came to have almost a power than Europe's coalitions!

Ferdinand was nominally Prince of Bulgaria. He must become Prince in fact, and drive the Turks from Europe. He must get together four kings to reconquer Constantinople for the Christian world.

Nearly 450 years had passed since the white horse of Mahomet II. sullied the floor of St. Sophia, and the Christian basilica of Justinian became a Turkish mosque. The times seemed ripe to the unworlly Princess. To the rest of the world they seemed just otherwise. But the Princess saw clearest.

She had only a legend to go on. And thus it goes: St. Sophia shall again become a Christian basilica when four Kings sit beneath its dome to hear a Te Deum of thanksgiving for their victory.

The tradition goes back to the sack of 1453.

Constantinople, when taken by the Turks, united all the marvels of art, religion and civilization that remained in the world. The palace was incalculable, accumulated riches of 1,000 years, the commerce of the known globe. The Russian Cardinal Isidore estimated at \$400,000,000 the treasure taken in palaces and churches has never been estimated. Precious carpets, purple robes, etc., served as bedding to the Sultan's camp, and 200,000 volumes from the libraries found the basis of the followers of the Prophet.

Now for the legend in completeness.

When the janissaries burst into Constantinople the city was so vast that the Turks were pillaging palace and mosque before the residential quarters knew the walls had fallen. Those who could rushed with their women to the vast space of St. Sophia, where 100,000 people barricaded themselves under the dome.

The battering in of the bronze doors announced the arrival of the Turks. The aspect of the trembling multitude was even the mercenaries of Mahomet hesitate. Already rich in ransoms, but tempted by the proclamation that they should possess their captives as slaves, they hesitated between carnage and profit.

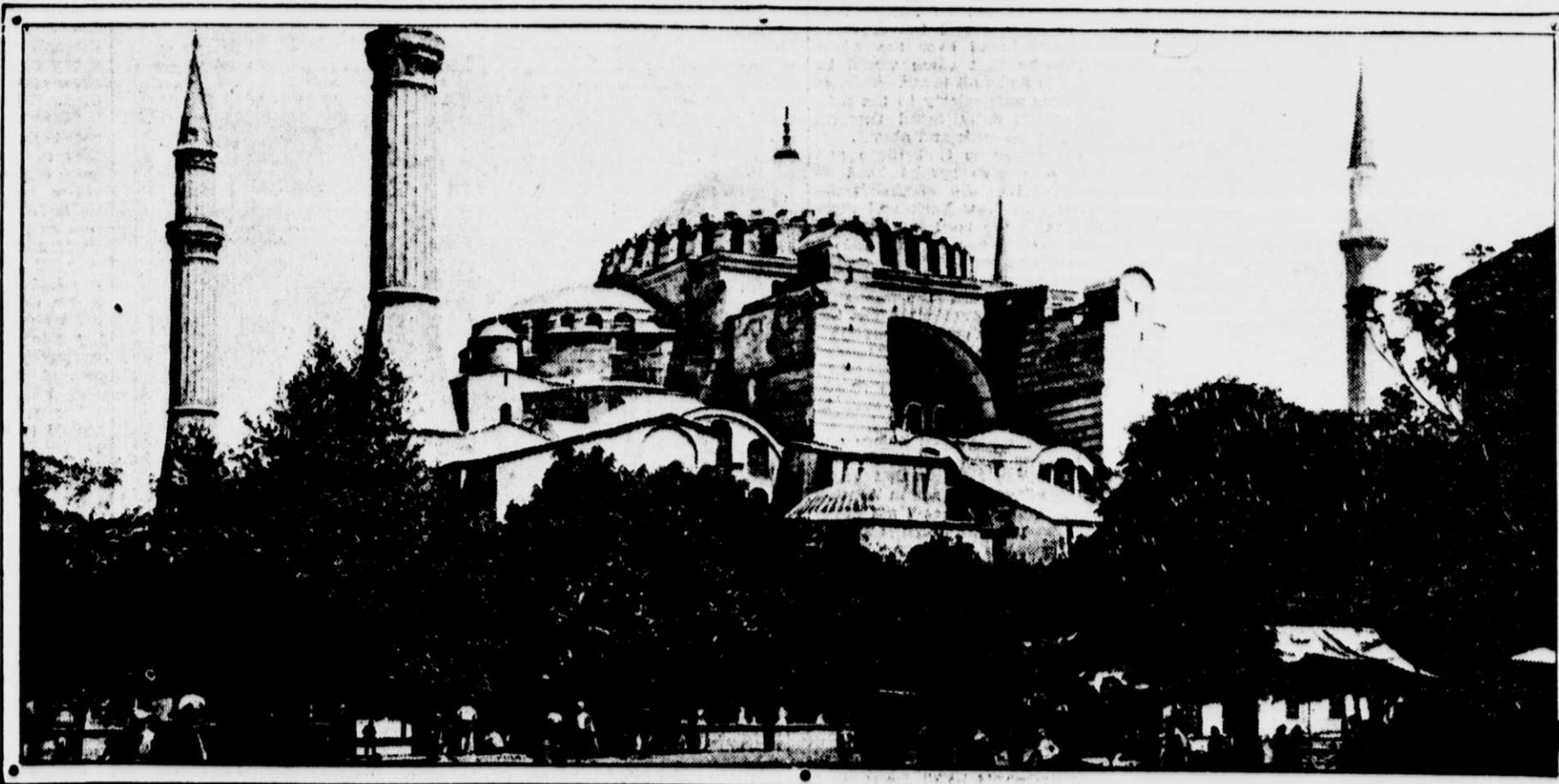
At that moment there appeared a great procession of the priests of St. Sophia. To solemn music they placed themselves between the people and the barbarians. The Turk leaders were impressed. A popular captain sheathed his scimitar and laughed. The sound and gesture were contagious. No murder soiled the floor of St. Sophia. The Greeks themselves stretched out their arms to the hand-cuffs of the Turks. Women and virgins were tied with their veils and driven out to the bazaar.

Then last look was for the priests who had so courageously intervened. Not one was visible. How, where had they gone? So rose the legend that the priests of St. Sophia had miraculously disappeared into the earth, and that when Constantinople should again be taken by Christians and four Kings hear the Te Deum the floor



Ferdinand I. of Bulgaria.

Above—Bulgarian infantry in the mountains.



The Mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople, where the prophecy says the Four Kings will hear a Te Deum of victory.

Strange Contest Between the
'Little Czar's' German Wife
and Inspiration of His
Dead French Princess

of St. Sophia will open and the old procession rise up, with the holy objects in their hands.

"When are these things to be?" asked Ferdinand, according to the story.

"The legend is Venetian," said the Princess. "All will happen when a Patriarch of Venice sits in the chair of St. Peter. Let us do our part, and God will put the patriarch there, when all is ready. Ferdinand, be King, and draw three Kings around you!"

So did the idealistic French Princess start on her high political career in Bulgaria. She worked hand in hand with Ferdinand. Almost every educational, charitable and technical institution of the land owes its origin to them.

They organized Bulgaria out of her riches. Diplomats, administrators, technicians, priests, sisters and contractors were constantly on the go, to and from the Chateau of Rhodope, where the happy couple made their home.

The gardens were hers. She delighted in antique reliefs and broken capitals. She loved fountains, flowers and birds, in particular swallows, whose nests she would not permit to be disturbed. "She was an angel," say the Bulgarian women to this day.

They accomplished great works for the people. They sowed the seeds of understanding with Serbia, Montenegro and Greece. Russia remained suspicious. The birth of a son gave them a chance of reconciliation; but could Christian politics demand it? Marie Louise was terrified at Russia's demand that her baby Boris be baptized orthodox. Six years she held out; but when the venerable Pope Leo



Prince Boris, the heir apparent, who, it is reported, will lead the Bulgarian armies.

XIII himself advised her to yield, Marie Louise made her last sacrifice—she gave her first-born to the dream of the Four Kings at Constantinople.

Then she died.

None appeared to be the dream of Christian glory! Gone, the conquest of the Turks, the Four Kings and their Princess leader! Coddily, with a dead heart, Ferdinand returned to Paris. Once again he became a frequenter of the boulevard.

True or false, the story is extraordinary. It alone explains the rapid rise and sudden fall which make the career of Ferdinand of Bulgaria an inexplicable mystery to this day.

The Pope died. Ferdinand was apathetic in Paris.

Pius X. was elected Pope. And Ferdinand was electrified. It struck him like a blow. "When a Patriarch of Venice shall sit in St. Peter's seat," And here was Pius X. Cardinal, Archbishop and Patriarch of Venice—the first such to be elected Pope since 1453!

Intense faith revived in Ferdinand. His Princess had told him true, and she would lead him from on high. He went to work again with self-contained genius. Few saw him do anything. He was supposed to be pottering over his roses. Few noticed that the old procession of administrators, technicians, diplomats, priests, contractors and military men had started up again. Then, suddenly, the states together.

He spared himself nothing, not even on the day when he was told he ought to take "a German wife." It clashed with his dream of a directing angel, but he complied.

She was Eleonora, Princess of the Reining and Sovereign House of Reuss. He married Eleonora in February, a handsome old maid with a heart overflowing with love—and a family overflowing with Imperial influence. In October of the same year Ferdinand was able to proclaim himself Czar (king) of Bulgaria. The following spring—six months after their wedding—all the Powers had recognized them as Czar and Czarina!

Now for the story of the second wife! It may be false. It is told as they tell it in Paris.

In the palace at Sofia there was a locked room—and her husband kept the key. The room contained no bullion chest or diplomatic secrets, but only a full-length, seated portrait of a Princess long departed. Sadly, the gentle Marie Louise looked from the gilded frame. And, although Ferdinand usually seemed to pass the door neglectful, there were days when he would look himself up with the portrait.

Eleonora lived in a haunted palace. She did not believe the superstitions of Bulgarian servants, or a presence wandering in the palace. "On such days," they whispered, "the Czar steals down to the chapel door and opens it, so that his dear Princess may pass in. And he kneels there, at the altar, waiting till she come and whisper counsel to his soul!"

Not did Eleonora believe the nurses of Little Princess Eudoxia, who after the child's long illness attributed her miraculous recovery to the prayers of her dead mother, seen in the chapel night, always kneeling in the same place.

Eleonora, all the same, grew wiser at Sofia. Her happiness would begin at the chateau, a paradise of fountains, birds and flowers! No wife could have a steeper husband. He took to working with his secretaries at "the little monastery," a mere bungalow. Its walls were decorated with antique reliefs. Its little park was full of old Greek capitals.

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